

"This isn't just a city problem.
We want a capital city people can visit
and be proud of."

The Cultural Education Center, home of the New York State Museum, houses 6,000,000 volumes of the State Library collection plus one-of-a-kind historical documents, including Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.



CITY OF MARBLE

A look into the
Empire State Plaza

While the cost of erecting an office tower averages \$40 per square foot, the figure for the four Agency Buildings was \$160.



It was a windy, wintry day when Rockefeller uncovered the dedication stone of his monument. This was the end of an artistic experience; the dedication stone was Nelson Rockefeller's signature on his piece of art.

Mall builders literally fought off the elements; a broken main flooded underground areas with 2,000,000 gallons of water.



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ALBANY, N.Y. 12207

CITY OF MARBLE

I The 20th-Century Governor

One powerful man transformed the crumbling city into a flourishing capital. War-weary residents welcomed the end to a century of decay and looked forward to everlasting prosperity as they worked faithfully for the new administration. Just as their inspirational leader had promised, their city soon became the greatest capital in the world. Only Augustus Caesar could have taken the credit as he did 2,000 years ago when he said, "I found Rome a city of bricks and left it a city of marble."

The 20th-century governor of an Empire State undertook a parallel campaign to duplicate the ancient Caesar's dream. Nelson Rockefeller found his capital a city of rotting brick tenements and left it adorned with a huge complex of marble-faced buildings, the Empire State Plaza.

To area residents, it's still the South Mall, a construction project begun with vigor 15 years ago and now limping towards



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Special thanks to our fathers.

For The Record...

The Health Department laboratories are equipped with the desktop microscopes we're all familiar with, but it figures that a project as big as the Mall would include one of the largest microscopes in the world. The million-dollar instrument stands

28 feet high

weighs

22 tons

and is used in cancer and infectious disease research. The lab boasts a ventilation system which completely changes the inside air

every 4 minutes

Another world record for the Mall: The largest pneumatic waste collection and processing system. Each day this wonder sucks

50,000 pounds

of paper through its tubes, shreds it and squashes it into a trailer.

In answer to the inevitable questions: The Mall has enough marble to cover

40 football fields

enough concrete to pave a

2 lane highway

from Albany to Buffalo and enough steel to construct

2 Verrazano bridges

Enough?

For the state worker on a water diet or the visitor in search of an oasis during treks through the Mall,

247 water fountains

stand ready to be stepped on.

The air-conditioning system was built to cool air not only for the immense Mall, but also for the Capitol, the Smith Building and the State Education Building. Five huge water-chilling units are capable of cooling

31,775 gallons

of water from 65 to 38 degrees in

one minute

This system, which cost

\$15,000,000

is one of the world's largest.



“...We want a capital city people can visit and be proud of...”

completion. Much more than a bunch of buildings though, the Mall is a concrete (and marble, steel and glass) illustration of its creator, and the story of the Mall's construction is a catalog of questionable politics and catastrophic goofs. The people of Albany never dreamed that such an ordeal was in store for them when Nelson Rockefeller came to claim his capital city.

Upon his arrival at Albany's Executive Mansion in 1959, the new governor spoke kindly of the old Victorian home and his new neighbors; but this was clearly not the type of community he was accustomed to. Blocks of decaying tenements known collectively as the Gut had the chambers and offices of his state government surrounded. One day early in his first term, after hosting a visit by a European princess, Rockefeller admitted embarrassment at the sorry condition of his capital city. The inner urban area, abandoned by the young middle-class during the suburban trend of the 1950's, had been left to the old, the poor, and a Rockefeller.

The deterioration of Albany also embarrassed Mayor Erastus Corning II, who was desperate for some form of urban renewal plan. As state workers were gradually moved to a consolidated state office campus under construction three miles away, downtown businesses were threatened with extinction. Corning asked the new governor for help in rehabilitation, and Rockefeller was the right man to go to. "This is not just a city problem," the governor responded, "We want a capital city that people can visit and be proud of."

With those words, Nelson Rockefeller embarked on a long adventure through the storms of public opinion and partisan politics, driven by the artistic soul of his youth and the acid determination of his experience. His imagination conceived a

single strategy which would not only revitalize Albany and centralize state agencies, but would also satisfy the frustrated architect within him and, incidentally, create a magnificent monument to his own administration.

Fifteen years and nearly two billion dollars later, the marble towers of the Mall loom as awesome as did the skyscrapers of Rockefeller Center when they began to rise in New York City 40 years ago. Nelson had been part of the team behind that family project, but the Center remained a monument to another generation. These were Nelson's years as The Rockefeller, and he would stop at nothing to create "The most electrifying capital in the world." Today, the first sight of his creation in this old Dutch town is indeed a shocker.

The heart of the Mall is the mammoth platform, stretching from the 19th-century Capitol to the new Cultural Education Center, home of the New York State Museum. The platform is a six-story structure which houses facilities for parking, maintenance and support operations in its bottom four floors. The fifth level is the underground concourse, a long corridor which branches into Mall buildings, cafeterias, newsstands, a bus terminal, a post office and an auditorium. Up on the roof, the sixth level, is an open pedestrian area with three reflecting pools and modern works of sculpture.

The 44-story Tower Building, tallest in the state outside Manhattan, and four identical 23-story office buildings rise from the platform. Across the street from the Capitol are the plush offices of New York's legislature and judiciary. The Swan Street Building, home of the Department of Motor Vehicles, is a quarter mile long.

The oddest structure is the unique Meeting Center, perched on a pedestal above the platform. Most people call it the Egg, but to others it's a half-grapefruit, a cereal bowl, or a radar dish with a roof.

In order to plant the seeds of these buildings in the middle of the city, Rockefeller had to first change the existing plan to consolidate state workers in a new complex outside the city. He asked the legislature to create the Temporary Commission on the Capital City, chaired by Lieutenant Governor Malcolm Wilson. The legislature complied, not suspecting that this commission's work would result in a massive state undertaking oddly independent of legislative or voter approval.

During the summer of 1961, the Wilson Commission held public hearings and hired planners to study the city and propose how the state might help rejuvenate it. Rockefeller's loyal lieutenant laid the groundwork of citizen support for improvement, and led the commission to an official affirmation of the governor's intentions: The state would redirect its offices back to the downtown district.



The Tower Building

There's no mistaking the outstanding feature in Albany's skyline. The 44-story Tower Building is the tallest in the state outside Manhattan. (Including Manhattan it ranks 41st in height.) The spearhead-shaped tower rises 589 feet above the Platform and is connected underground to the Concourse and parking levels.

About 3,000 employees of the Office of General Services, the Health Department and other agencies work here. Nineteen passenger and two freight elevators operate at a maximum speed of 24 feet per second.

Critics of the Mall were amused when they learned that the concrete core of the Tower was cast a bit out of plumb. The tilt was corrected when the steel reinforcements were placed, allowing the 'Leaning Tower of Albany' to stand straight and tall.

The observation deck offers a pleasing view of the countryside surrounding Albany. Just to the north and almost straight down is the downtown district. Across the river lies Rensselaer with the Berkshire Mountains in the distance. Looking southward there's the Hudson River winding past the Port of Albany towards the Catskills.

Also in plain sight from the Tower is the arterial system and cloverleaf which line the riverfront; the decaying areas of Albany spared by the bulldozers in the 1960's; and straight down to the south, the Executive Mansion.

The Meeting Center

It's not the tallest or the largest structure in Albany, but the unique Meeting Center is the most mysterious of them all. The Egg's two auditoriums will be open for state functions and other public gatherings. The halls seat 950 and 500 people and slope downwards towards the center stage area.

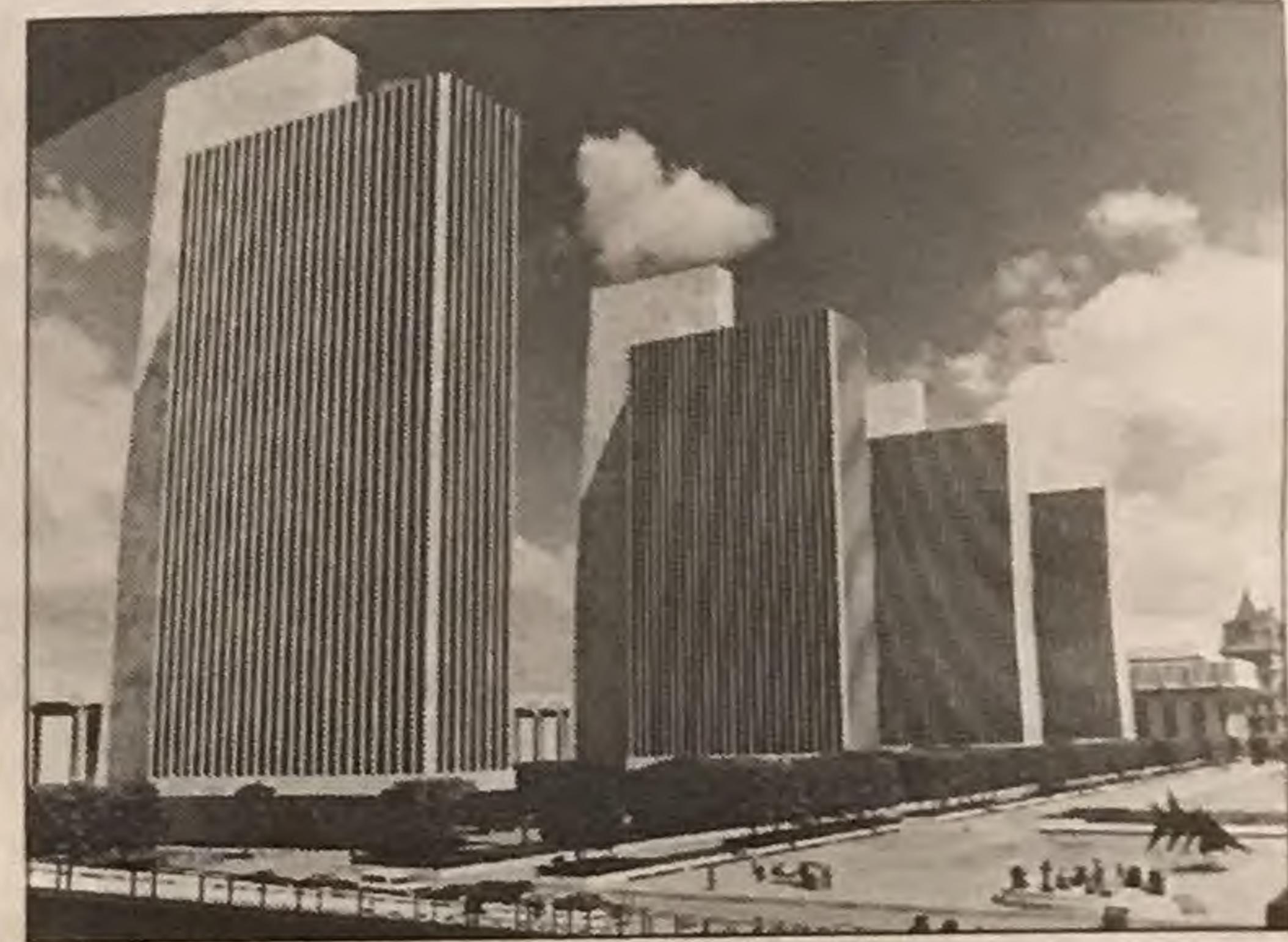
The Egg was built by connecting huge cables to the reinforced concrete in a barrel-hoop fashion. The shell of the Egg is four and one half feet thick at the bottom, but only 14 inches thick at the top rim.

Below the Meeting Center, on the Concourse level, are more meeting rooms and a large multi-purpose auditorium which seats 2,500. This section of the Mall is home for the Empire State Youth Theater Institute.

The city was delighted by the announcement. Mayor Corning saw employment for voting laborers; businessmen welcomed the 10,000 shoppers who would boost faltering sales; and the governor, officially detached from the proceedings, said he was enthusiastic about the city's future. For Rockefeller, this first step was a snap.

The second step was more like a giant leap. On March 25, 1962, the State Superintendent of Public Works filed appropriation maps to claim for the state 98.5 acres of land to the south of the Capitol. The territory included 29 whole city blocks and parts of 11 others, the 3300 homes of 6800 people, 350 small businesses, three churches, two public schools and a city police headquarters.

Residents of the area did not panic at the news. They were assured that they would not be kicked out of their homes for at least 30 days, that they had \$300 moving expenses coming to them, and that owners could appeal the state's valuation of their



“...The marble towers loom awesomely over the old Dutch town...”

property. There was uncertainty, but overall there was an optimistic attitude about the future.

The loudest critic of the action turned out to be Mayor Corning. “It is what might be expected in a dictatorship,” he said of the appropriation of land. “Do not build this magnificent monument on a foundation of human misery.” The display of outrage was perplexing considering that Corning originally asked for state aid and applauded the commission's decision to build in the downtown area. But he took the case to court and received a restraining order barring any state claims to property.

Rockefeller and Wilson assured Corning that the design of the project would include housing for low-income and elderly

residents. While the state waited for the courts to clear the mayor's obstacle, Rockefeller went ahead and named the project's architects.

It came as no surprise when Wallace K. Harrison was named chief architect. Harrison, a long-time Rockefeller friend

**"...Nelson considered
how to use his political tools
to mold land, labor and materials
into his greatest piece..."**

and associate, worked on such landmarks as Lincoln Center and United Nations Headquarters in New York City, and was co-designer of Rockefeller Center.

Harrison and two other firms began drawing plans for what was then dubbed the South Mall, but these professionals were guided in their work by an amateur architect who submitted design ideas sketched on paper napkins. The amateur was Nelson Rockefeller.

"Architecture has fascinated me ever since boyhood," Rockefeller admitted. "What I always wanted to be was an architect." The profession appealed to him during his years at Dartmouth College, but he chose instead a life of public service. Throughout his political career, however, Nelson has demonstrated his love of art. He created state councils to make a diversity of art forms accessible to all regions of the state and commissioned architects to design award-winning new campuses for the expanding State University system.

"Modern forms of artistic expression are the only areas left in democracy where there is true freedom, where you have absolute freedom and no holds are barred," he lectured to students in 1967. Rockefeller took great pride in his collection of modern works and in his freedom to appreciate them. He realized that while he understood abstract expressionism and the creative processes, other men in his line were ignorant of such concepts. "For some reason politicians have a feeling that culture is a very dangerous subject and that they should avoid it," he said.

For this politician, the chance to have a hand in the design of the South Mall was the fulfillment of a boyhood fantasy, an opportunity to exercise the long-suppressed need to design and create as an artist. Architecture had given way to politics in his early life. Now, politics became architecture as Nelson considered how to use his political tools to mold land, material and labor into his greatest piece.



The Agency Buildings

Lined up behind the dominant Tower like obedient soldiers are the four Agency Buildings, so named because they house various state agencies such as the Public Service Commission and the Banking and Insurance Departments. These identical 23-story towers are numbered 1 through 4 from the south end (nearest the Museum) to the north.

Each Agency Building is connected by elevator to the underground Concourse area. The marble-covered elevator cores are surrounded on three sides by the glass-lined office structures. To wash the outsides of windows on the Agency towers, new window-washing machines are located on the roofs of these buildings and the Tower. Men are lowered in a cage to wash a vertical row of windows and then returned to the top. The machine is moved on a set of tracks and the cage is lowered over another row.

The Agency Buildings are the prime example of inefficient design at the Mall. Altogether the four have a total amount of usable office space equal to only half of the usable space in a nearby private office building.



The Justice Building

The judicial branch of New York State's government is centered in the Justice Building, closest Mall building to the downtown district. Similar in design, but much smaller than its legislative counterpart, this Georgia Cherokee marble-faced building houses the Law Department and Library, the third division of the Appellate Court, and the Court of Claims.

Ironically, the Court of Claims handled all cases involving the state's takeover of Albany properties in the Mall area. Now there is a separate claims courtroom in each of the upper corners of the building.

The two prominent pieces of art here are the mural by Fritz Glarner and a metal sculpture by Alexander Liberman.

II

Personal Charm And Political Muscle

The architectural obsession of great and notorious men alike can be traced through history, from the marble halls of ancient Rome to the huge stadia and palaces of Nazi Germany. While Rockefeller's dream of building the Empire State Plaza followed this tradition of megalomania, he was restricted by the limitations that a modern society places on its elected officials. As wealthy and powerful as he was, Rockefeller would still have to drive his grandiose plans through the New York State Legislature and the local government of his capital city. His executive authority would suffice for actual construction, but to break ground he needed the support of less powerful people.

To gain this support, Rockefeller relied on two of his most valuable assets: personal charm and political muscle. In government the two overlap as when one politician smiles, slaps another on the back and says, "Hiya fella, say I'd really appreciate your vote, pal. We don't want to cause any problems

now, do we?" It is said that Governor Rockefeller owned one party in New York State and leased the other. His manipulation of government in the course of this project would prove the truth of that saying.

Rockefeller won over the citizens of Albany with the promise of an exciting new capital city, and persuaded the legislature to give \$20 million to buy the needed property. There was but one man who stood immovable in the way of the South Mall, so Rockefeller turned his attention to the appeasement of the tough city-machine boss, Erastus Corning.

Corning knew that he could bargain with Rockefeller, offering cooperation for a price. "The first step should be to start building the housing needed," Corning said, "Then and only then should the land be taken."

The solution to this obstacle seemed simple enough to Rockefeller, who sent out Lt. Governor Wilson to assure that "comprehensive plans for functional new housing facilities in other parts of the city are involved." Later, Rockefeller gave his own emphatic word on housing: "The state is ready, willing, able and anxious..." to cooperate with the building of housing for displaced residents.

The mayor, however, had another problem. With the state taking control of this large chunk of the city, Albany stood to lose at least \$500,000 a year in property taxes, which Corning contended the city should be compensated for.

If these local grumblings weren't enough, Rockefeller had a financing problem of his own. His administration was based

"...Corning knew he could bargain with Rockefeller, offering cooperation for a price..."

on a "pay-as-you-go" spending policy designed to avoid large deficits, but this immense building project would require large outlays not feasible under that policy.

As Corning and Rockefeller pondered their dilemmas, the courts cleared the way for site clearance that summer of 1962, with Rockefeller himself at the controls of the demolition crane. Architects sketched plans at a frantic pace to meet deadlines. Owners of property in the area filed claims at such a rate that 3,325 cases swamped the State Supreme Court desk of Judge Charles T. Major.

Judge Major, age 66, was asked by the governor to dispose of these cases as quickly as possible. Major worked diligently for six months, refusing vacation leave, and settled an astounding 2,134 cases before he suffered a heart attack and died. A court

MAN VS. MALL

Mall construction crews literally fought off the elements to complete their Herculean tasks. At first it was the earth, too soft to support skyscrapers. When the tons of clay had been removed, workers found themselves shivering in Albany's winter air. The men started small fires to warm themselves, but later on the buildings acquired the nasty habit of burning on their own. Except for a few major blazes, most of the 50 or so fires caused little damage. The final element, water, attacked



when a main broke and spilled two million gallons throughout the underground areas.

At times it seemed the builders' own equipment was after their lives. Three men caulked windows outside the 39th floor of the Tower Building one day, when their scaffolding suddenly collapsed from underneath them. Thousands watched from below as the three desperately clung to the ledge and struggled to climb through the windows to safety.

Although the Mall's safety record during construction was a good one, other workers were not as lucky as the three cliff-hangers. One man came down from the 22nd floor the hard way — without an elevator; a carpenter was killed by a falling crane load of wood; and another man was fatally injured by a misguided bulldozer. More fortunate accident victims survived such calamities as falling crane booms, torch explosions and falls into open holes.

THE BICENTENNIAL HORSE

Archeologists were excited when the skull of a horse was discovered at the Mall site during excavation. They thought at first that they had found the first New York State fossil of a prehistoric horse, but were later disappointed when the truth came out. Workers had actually come across a horse's grave which was no more than 200 years old.

WHO ASKED YOU?

You say you can't recall voting for the South Mall in a general referendum? Your memory isn't failing you — it's because the issue of this massive state building project never came up to the voters. The financing scheme invented by Mayor Corning and eagerly accepted by Rockefeller sidestepped the voters and the spirit of the State Constitution. Article 7, Section II states:

"No debt shall hereafter be contracted by or on behalf of the state, unless such debt shall be authorized by law... No debt shall take effect until it shall, at a general election, have been submitted to the people and received a majority of all the votes cast."



The "I Told You So" award goes to South Mall critic Assemblyman Edwyn Mason (R-Delaware County), who called for a bipartisan committee to investigate the Mall project in March, 1965.

"The entire project has a devious air and a very bad odor about it," he said.

THE DEFENSE NEVER RESTS

Even after he left New York State in 1973, former Governor Rockefeller has been asked to defend the South Mall from time to time. When the U.S. Senate Rules Committee questioned him during his vice-presidential hearings, Rockefeller said the Mall was necessary to replace "one of the worst slums in the United States, with the highest child mortality rate in the country."

"What we didn't realize," he said in defense of high costs, "was that the land, in a valley, was mud. So we had to go into great expense to make sure that the buildings didn't sink."

THE 12TH BUILDING

The South Mall's huge demand for water, four times that of the entire city of Albany, is supplied by a pumping station on the west



shore of the Hudson River. The facility, which treats 100,000 gallons of water a day, was awarded by the New York State Council on the Arts for its excellence in design and contribution towards beautifying Albany's waterfront.

THE ROMAN CONNECTION

The New York Times received a letter in 1971 from a reader who offered an historical perspective to the controversy over rising costs and hinted a solution to the problem. Quoting from Edward Gibbons's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, he wrote:

"But in the execution of the work, the charge amounted to more than double the estimate, and the officers of the revenue began to murmur, until the generous Atticus silenced their complaints by requesting that he might be permitted to take upon himself the whole additional expense."

The reader suggested that Rockefeller might follow that admirable example.

which awarded workman's compensation benefits to his widow ruled that the man had been worked to death.

The rush to get on with construction was under way, but still the mayor and governor had to agree on how to finance the thing.

The answer came in the form of an elaborate state-county scheme dreamt up by none other than Mayor Corning, one year after he took the state to court to halt the project. "We were left with a 98-acre hole in the ground and the state wasn't doing anything," Corning said to justify his turnaround. Rockefeller didn't question the mayor's motives. He recognized the genius of Corning's plan and took to it, as the mayor told Fortune Magazine, "like a trout takes to a fly."

The key to the billion-dollar filling for Albany's muddy cavity was a law invented by Corning in March 1963 and signed by Rockefeller in April. Technically, the law permits the state to construct new buildings without having the issue approved by the voters in a general election. Specifically, the County of Albany would sell bonds to raise the money for all construction costs, and at the same time lease the property to the state. The state would pay an annual rent to the county equal to the amount the county owed its bondholders, whatever that might be. The state would also make an annual payment to the county in lieu of property taxes (roughly \$600,000 per year). So, Corning got the missing tax income and Rockefeller was handed a financing formula which seemed to abide by his "pay-as-you-go" policy. The state would pay as it went over the course of a 40-year lease, and would gain sole ownership of the Mall on January 1, 2005.

Four days after the law was enacted, the triumphant mayor and governor assembled with the Mall's architects to unveil a model of the project. "As I look at this magnificent model," said Corning, "I consider this the most significant day in the entire history of Albany and of the state."

For the first time Albany residents got a look at the marble towers that were to replace the Gut, and it wasn't long before criticism of the design began flowing. A writer to The New York Times complained, "Given the advantages of ample acreage and a dominant hilltop site, the planners have come up with a complex of the same tall, up-ended boxes that are spoiling the Manhattan skyline." Progressive Architecture Magazine reacted strongly to the "badly related, diverse forms," of what it termed "an exercise in architectural pop art."

Architect Harrison responded in defense of his (and Rockefeller's) design. "It's certainly going to be one of the few places in the world where that American invention, the skyscraper, is given its proper place in relation to the buildings around it," he said.

THE MALL BY ANY OTHER NAME

The complex has had two official names in its life, the South Mall from its birth until 1973, and then the Empire State Plaza. At the same time, however, the Mall has had a number of nicknames, among them: *Rocky's Folly*, *Rockefeller Center North*, *Brasilia North*, *Rocky's Erector Set* and the *South Maul*.

THE NAPKIN ARTIST



The above sketch is a Rockefeller original, drawn in 1966 to indicate the location of the 6,000-seat amphitheater (darkened area). The pools and buildings are drawn in fairly accurate proportions and relative placement, although the Egg proved to be a slight problem for the artist.

“...That American invention, the skyscraper, is given its proper place in relation to the buildings around it...”

costly to the state in the long run. He pointed out that the county pays higher interest rates on its bonds than the state would have, had the state brought a bond issue to the voters. Also, payments to the county in lieu of property taxes would add up to an enormous sum over 40 years. Levitt thus emerged as the chief critic of the Mall, a vociferous role he would play for 10 long years.

The matter was out of his hands though, as the Office of General Services (OGS) began awarding contracts. Much of the Gut had been cleared at a rate of two or three buildings per day and by June, 1965, the stage was set for Rockefeller to once again play master of ceremonies. As a 7500-pound block of granite was laid as the cornerstone of the Swan Street Building, Rockefeller called the event the beginning of “Albany’s transformation into one of the most brilliant, beautiful, efficient and electrifying capitals in all the world.”

THE FALLEN ARCH

Original plans for the Mall included a 336-ft. high arch to rise above the south end of the Platform, where the Cultural Education Center stands today. This Arch of Freedom was designed to commemorate Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, but was dropped from the plans when the first cornerstone was laid in 1965.

STATE OF THE STATE

Governor Hugh Carey has continued to use the construction of the South Mall as an example of what New Yorkers can no longer afford to put up with. In his 1977 message to the Legislature he asked: “Do the people of New York hold the belief that the measure of a well-managed government is one that succeeds in building marble monuments to itself at their expense and that of their children... through debt arranged without their permission? I believe not, and if some ever did, they cannot now.”

“It does no one good,” he continued, “to see government towers in the clouds while on the streets below corporations that create jobs are departing.”

In response to a question about inadequate fire protection in the Mall, Carey said, “I’ll keep that Mall safe, but let me make one thing very clear... I didn’t build that Mall.”



A Key to the Plaza

1 CULTURAL EDUCATION CENTER
State Museum
State Library
Archives Center

2 SWAN STREET BUILDING
Department of Motor Vehicles
Racing and Wagering Board
Lottery Division

3 AGENCY BUILDING 1
Office of Parks and Recreation
Insurance Department

4 AGENCY BUILDING 2
Miscellaneous small agencies

5 AGENCY BUILDING 3
Public Service Commission

6 AGENCY BUILDING 4
Banking Department
Equalization and Assessment
Division of Veterans' Affairs

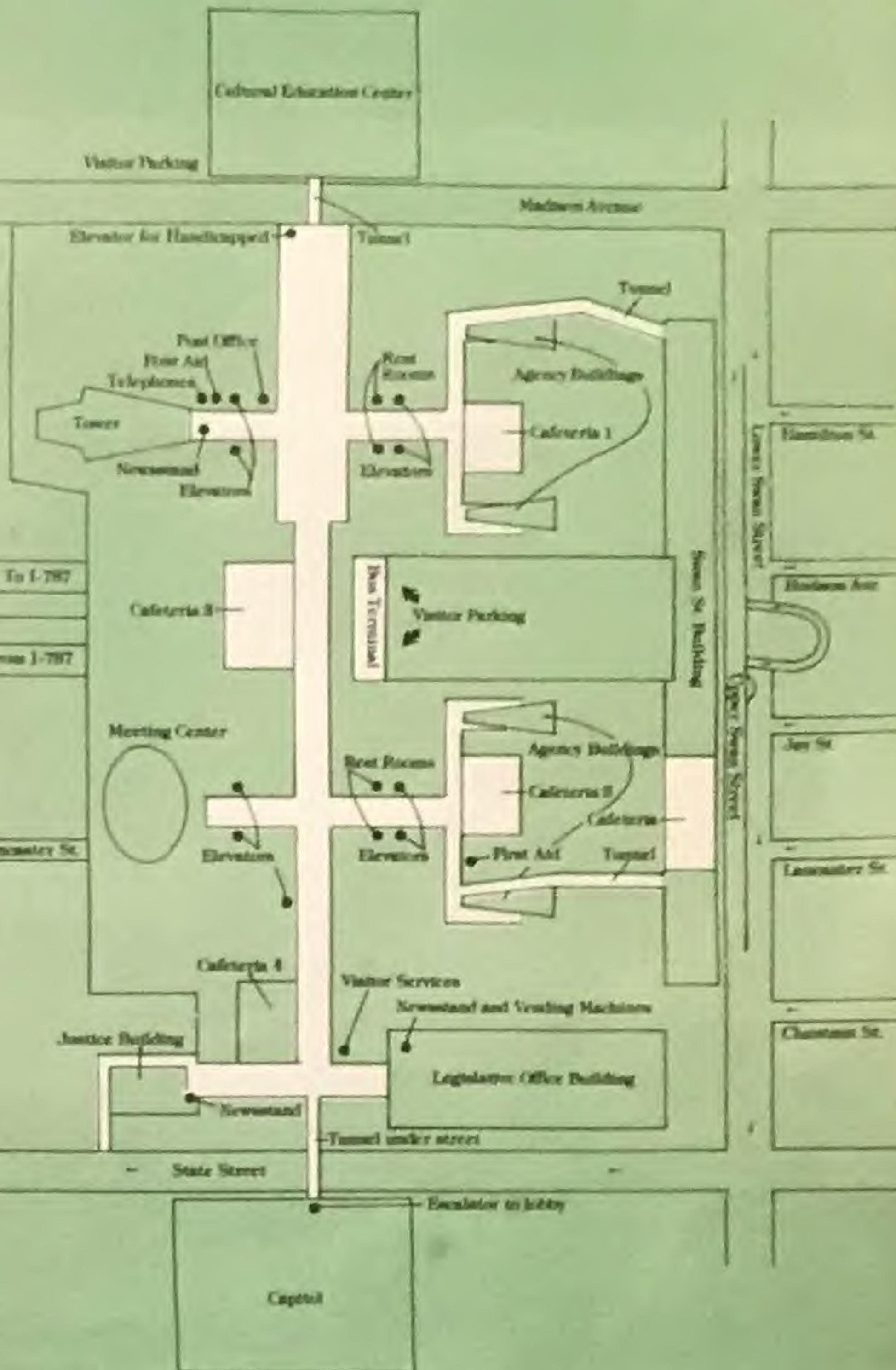
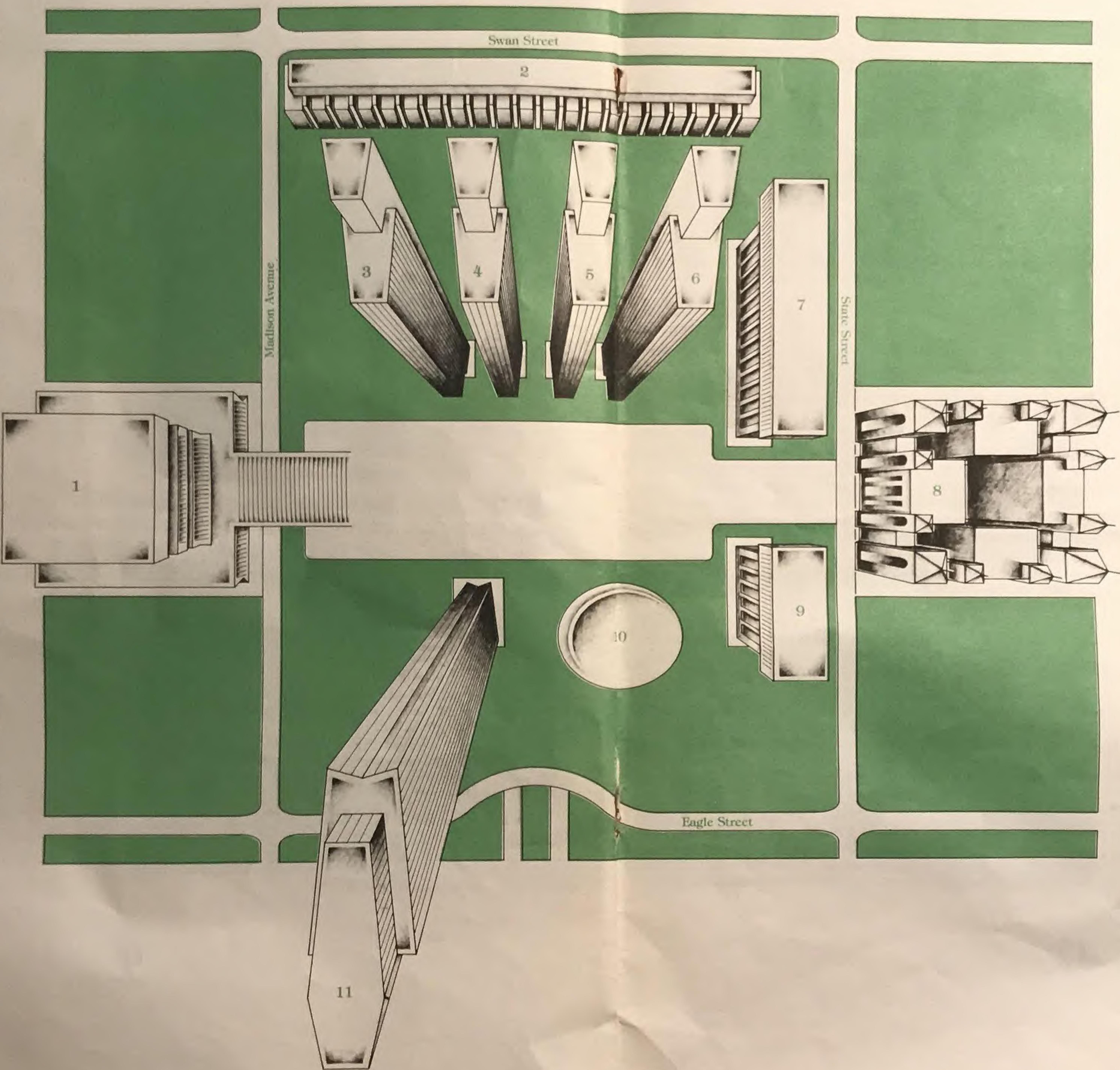
7 LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
Hearing rooms
Committee rooms

8 CAPITOL BUILDING
Legislative Chambers
Executive Chambers

9 JUSTICE BUILDING
Law Department
Appellate Division
Court Administration
Court of Claims

10 MEETING CENTER (EGG)
950-seat Auditorium
500-seat Auditorium

11 TOWER BUILDING
Office of General Services
Higher Education Services Corporation
Health Department
Commission on Correction
Division of Probation
Board of Social Welfare



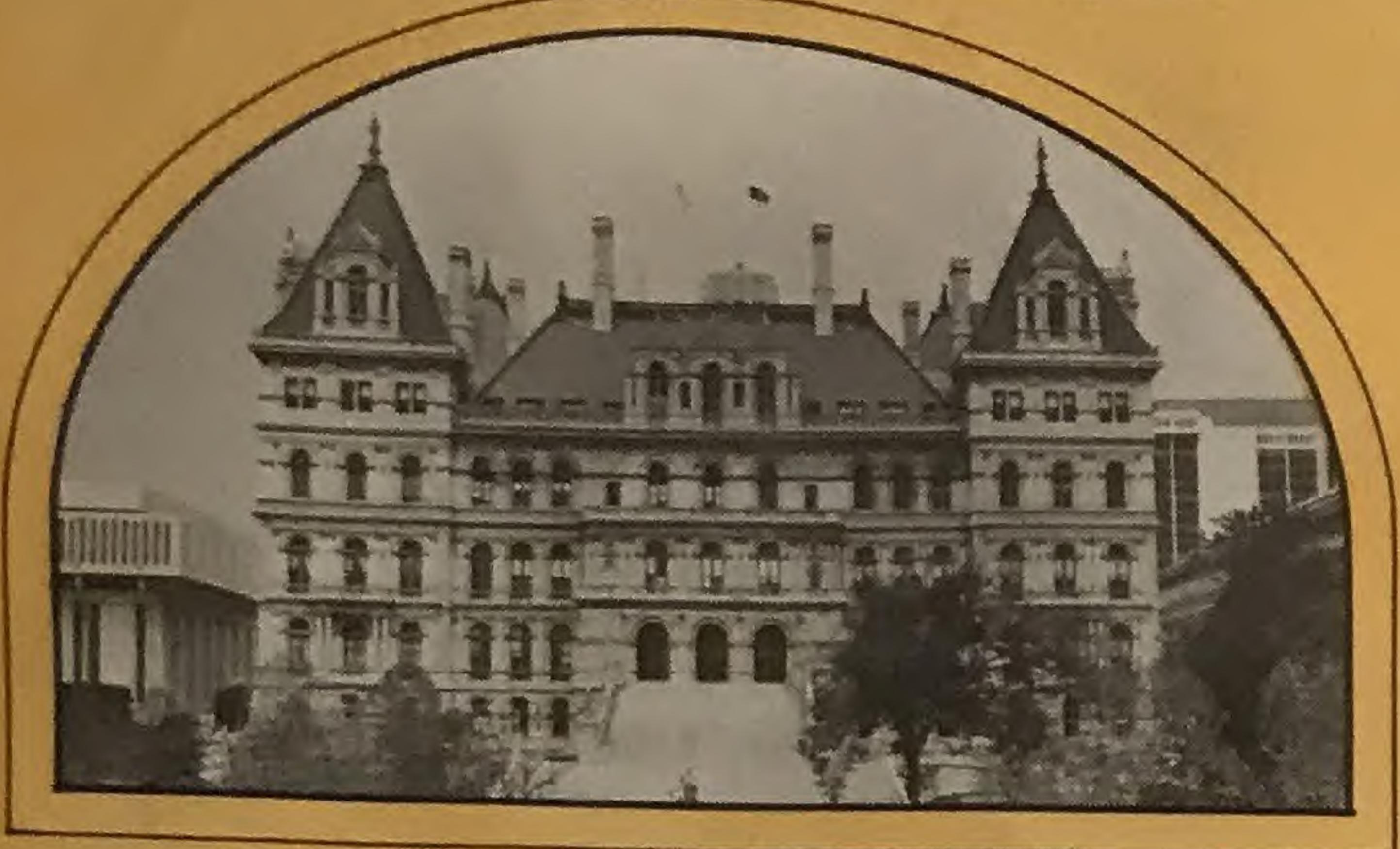
The many twists and turns of the underground world of the Empire State Plaza are revealed by this map. The maze of corridors, tunnels and elevators provides weather-protected access to all buildings.

A tunnel from the Museum leads to the south end of the Concourse, a long, wide hallway adorned with many works of modern painting and sculpture.

Information desks are located at the crossroads leading to the Tower Building, and just before the tunnel leading to the Capitol. The blue-jacketed staff of the Visitor Services Center, at the north end of the Concourse, will answer any questions and give detailed directions to your destination.

Around The Mall

Controversy in construction is nothing new to Albany; in fact it dates back to 1869 when work began on



The State Capitol

The grandiose granite structure was the talk of the town during 32 years of construction, and its \$25,000,000 price tag, a mere 1/60th the cost of the South Mall, boggled the minds of 19th-century critics.

A stroll through the Capitol is an educational and artistic experience. Guides will show you the

two magnificent legislative chambers; the "million-dollar" staircase with its intricate carvings; the Governor's Red Room and its portraits of former executives; and collections of historical state flags and military artifacts.

Tours begin on the hour between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., at the Tour Center on the first floor.

Rising 34 stories to the west of the Capitol is



The Governor Alfred E. Smith State Office Building

Like its neighbors, this edifice faced controversy during construction, when critics charged that it was too big to ever be filled.

Those critics, though, did not foresee the ballooning of state government and the need for even more office space very nearby.

One of the few homes spared during demolition of The Gut was Nelson Rockefeller's.



**The Executive Mansion
on Eagle Street**

has been the Albany residence of New York's governors since 1874. On the night of March 2, 1961, fire raged through the first floor and damaged much of Rockefeller's valuable art collection. The Governor escaped unharmed, even though he ran back inside for several Picassos and a portrait of his father.

III

Rome Wasn't Built In A Day

If the rest of the project had gone as smoothly as the laying of this first building block, Rockefeller may have been able to stick to his plan to complete the Mall by 1970 at a cost of \$400 million, but the ancient dream could not be easily or quickly translated into the realities of the 20th century. Rome was not built in a day, but had Rockefeller been in charge he would have given it his best shot. He discounted suggestions that the Mall be constructed over a 20-year period and instead set off a construction boom to complete it as quickly as possible. Much better to get it up now, he said, before costs of material and labor escalate beyond our reach.

To the contrary, the hectic pace set by the governor proved to be the tragic flaw in his artistic adventure. "Rocky wanted it yesterday," said one South Mall engineer, "and of course this was totally unreasonable." Rockefeller believed that since all the right political strings had been pulled, he could leave it to a few thousand laborers to piece his Mall together, but as actual construction began, a myriad of problems arose which prolonged the life and boosted the price of the Mall beyond the tolerable limits of most New Yorkers.

The very nature of this enormous project created problems which would not be encountered on a similar project in the private sector. The state conducts thorough testing and inspection of its public building projects to ensure quality and durability, so contractors are less likely to get away with shortcuts or less than adequate craftsmanship. These conditions, plus higher insurance requirements and the state's

tendency to be slow in making payments meant that the most reputable contractors would not go out of their way to get involved with the state when business elsewhere is so much easier.

Contracts were awarded for the foundation and superstructures in 1965, but before anything could go up something had to be done about the hilltop construction site which was a mass of mud and clay. Almost 3 million cubic yards of clay were carried to a dumping site by convoys of dump trucks. Homeowners living on the truck route suffered from unbearable noise, vibrations and clouds of clay settling all over their homes. Drivers of the speeding, overloaded trucks wore masks to protect themselves from the choking dust.

Once the clay was removed and the heavy equipment moved in, another problem became evident: Contractors and subcontractors working at the same time in the same place were forced to compete for work space. If a contractor was scheduled to work on the main platform, he could do nothing until certain foundation builders moved out of his way, but the foundation builders were forced to wait until other men had finished driving pilings into the ground, which couldn't be done until even more clay was removed. The contractor at the end of the line was delayed, as were all the others in line, through no fault of his own; there simply wasn't enough room for each man to complete his work on schedule.

This situation got to be sticky for the contractor who can't afford to stand around and wait. If he is contracted to do a \$1 million job in 90 days and is delayed another 90 days, he ends up

“...Rocky wanted it yesterday, said one engineer...”

working for half-pay. To prevent profits from dwindling, each contractor rushed to get on with his work, leading to physical confrontations and threats of legal battles over contracts.

When it looked as though the state would be sued by most of its contractors for causing these problems, the legislature passed a law permitting the Office of General Services to make "equitable adjustments" in contracts. Extra payments would be made to those companies whose work was "suspended, delayed or interrupted for an extraordinary and unreasonable period of time by any act or omission of the state." One very stalled construction firm, for example, requested an additional \$4,098,895.50 for 312 days of delay caused by the state. The George A. Fuller Company was originally hired as a consultant for \$5,250,000. By 1971 that contract had been boosted to \$24 million. Similarly, every major contract was hiked between

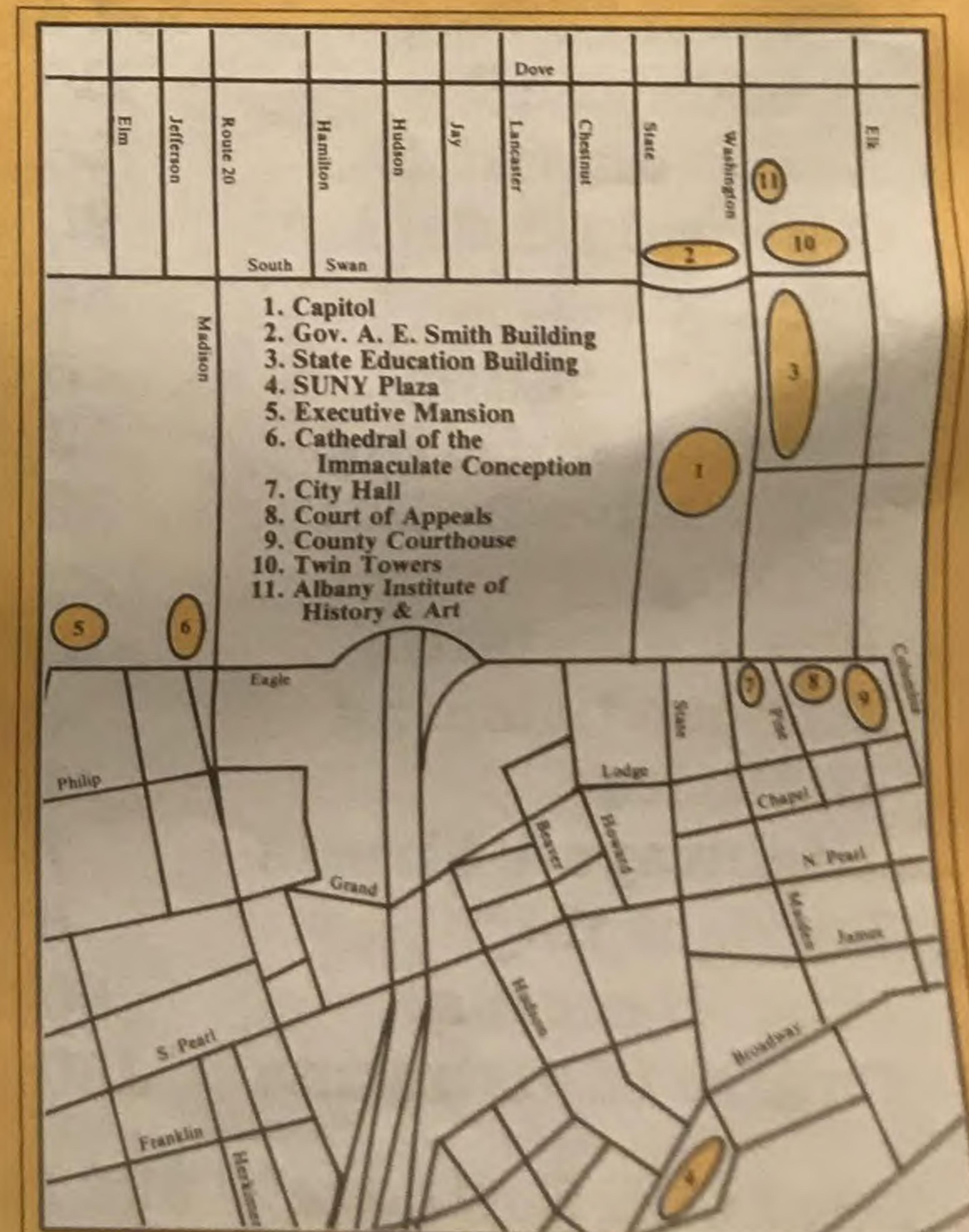


The State Education Building with its 36 Corinthian columns, is an interesting study in architecture. The classical colonnade contrasts its counterpart across Capitol Park, the Legislative Office Building, and symbolizes the state's commitment to education.

At the bottom of State Street hill stands another piece of Albany picked up by the state:



The State University Plaza
The former Delaware and Hudson Railroad building has been renovated to house the central administrative offices of the State University of New York (SUNY). The move to the restored Flemish Gothic structure and the development of a landscaped park are expected to improve the downtown area.



The Audit

The South Mall audit released in 1971 revealed some disturbing statistics on building efficiency. Normally, a designer tries to make maximum use of space available; the percentage of gross square feet usable as office space is usually 70-80 percent, and the cost of construction per square foot averages \$35 to \$46. The Department of Audit and Control's report, however, disclosed the following efficiency rates and average costs per square foot for Mall Buildings:

	efficiency rate	cost per square foot
Tower Building	54%	\$93.96
Agency Buildings	49	165.11
Swan St. Building	46	105.98
Legislative Building	46	137.91
Justice Building	40	198.75

The Audit's estimate of \$1.5 billion for Mall completion included costs for construction, financing charges and related arterials. The Office of General Services stands by its \$985 million estimate for construction alone.

Some additional statistics were computed to illustrate the extravagance of the project. The cost of building the Legislative Office Building was \$28,000 per employee in that building. For the Agency Buildings, the cost per employee exceeded \$31,000.

The percentages of space use show that most of the total space is meant for machines, not people. The total space designed for parking, storage, maintenance, core equipment and utilities adds up to 55.2%; public areas and office and special use space takes up the remaining 44.8%. The following list is the Office of General Services' 1971 estimate of various Mall expenses in millions of dollars.

Platform & Egg	\$265
Foundation	110
Lands, demolition	98
Cultural Ed. Center	90
Agency 1-4	54
Tower Building	38
Swan St. Building	33
Legislative Building	29
Design	29
Justice Building	18
Air-conditioning	14
Utilities	14
Highways & Streets	7
Landscaping	5
Miscellaneous	50
Future adjustments	130
Total OGS Estimate	\$985 million

1966 and 1974 until over \$100 million had been paid in these adjustments alone.

"The state was at fault," explained OGS Commissioner General C.V.R. Schuyler, "There was more complexity to the project than we realized."

The need for the equitable adjustment law and the huge payments made as a result were traced directly to Rockefeller's

"..It turned out there weren't enough square feet to go around..."

hasty approach to construction. By 1970, some Democrats began to point the finger at their nemesis for causing the alarming cost increases.

The most persistent pointer was Comptroller Levitt, who winced every time an adjusted contract was passed through his office. In 1967 Levitt released an audit on the project which revealed a projected total cost of over \$1 billion. OGS chief Schuyler noted that his office's estimate had risen from \$400 to \$600 million, but responded, "I don't see how it can approach a billion. I can't understand any basis for that."

Levitt was irate over the extravagant design of the project. The average cost per square foot for an office building in New York City is around \$40; the South Mall was averaging more than \$150 per square foot for some buildings. Not only was the cost per square foot extraordinarily high, it turned out that there weren't enough square feet to go around. Although this complex was supposed to consolidate state agencies, the state continued construction of the office campus outside the city and continues to rent an additional million square feet of office space around Albany.

There was no turning back though, the design had been adopted years earlier and was now in the hands of the thousands of workers on the site. These workers also controlled such extracurricular activities as gambling, ticket-fixing, loan-sharking and thievery. Truckloads of marble and other material disappeared from the site under the noses of 56 untrained security guards, some with criminal records, who received twice the pay of private guards and provided no security at all. Reports of criminal activity prompted a Federal Grand Jury to look into the involvement of organized crime, but no major indictments were produced.

Contractors were also free to try to take advantage of the project by making claims for contract adjustments, since it was a legal and regular procedure. The Foster-Lipkins Corp. asked that its contract be hiked \$18.3 million, but this time OGS put its foot down and fired the company instead.

As news of these scandals accumulated, Democrats began speaking out more often against Rockefeller's grand scheme to a point where such criticism was commonplace. Although the project was destined to be completed as planned, the issue had its use as a political campaign weapon. Assembly minority leader Stanley Steingut spoke up in 1969 when Rockefeller requested \$60 million in his deficiency budget to cover Mall cost increases. "We will not substitute concrete monuments for social progress," he said in a successful fight to cut that request by \$14 million.

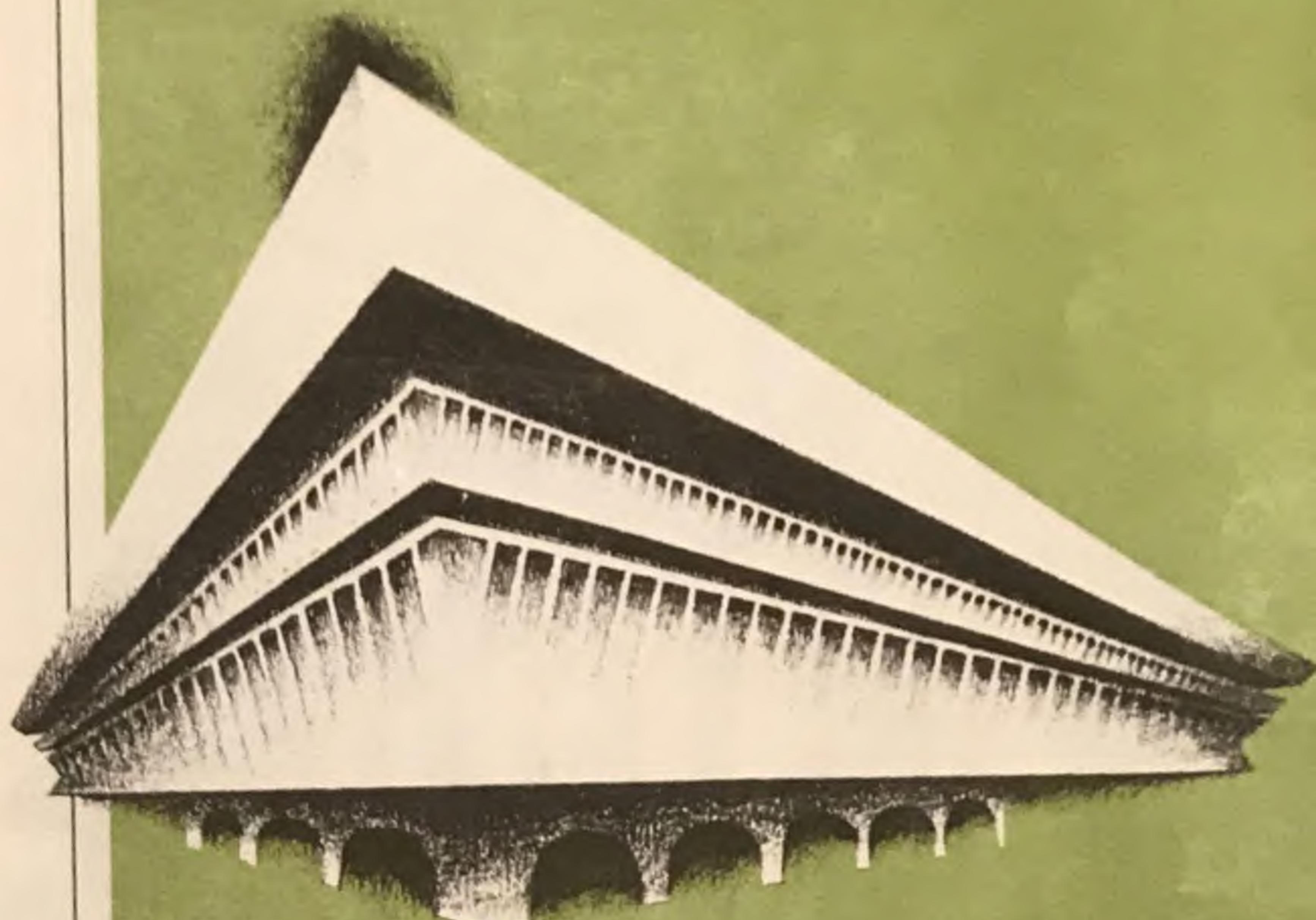
January, 1970 marked the opening of campaign season for Rockefeller and a handful of Democrats. Gubernatorial hopeful Eugene Nickerson claimed, "The Mall project epitomizes what is wrong with our society." Howard Samuels asked, "What is more ridiculous than to commit as much money to this monument to Governor Rockefeller as has been spent to end water pollution?" Arthur Goldberg, the eventual nominee,



**"...All right,
so I have an edifice complex..."**

noted that "Tens of millions of dollars are poured into the South Mall to build a monument to the governor, while local aid is cut and property taxes are forced up." The bandwagon was rolling against Rockefeller, loaded with charges of extravagance, waste, unethical financing, organized crime connections and the specter of megalomania.

It was during this campaign that Nelson Rockefeller



The Cultural Education Center

Standing opposite the Capitol at the south end of the Platform is the Cultural Education Center, home of the New York State Museum. This facility also houses 6 million volumes of the State Library collection, and one-of-a-kind historical documents, including Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, in the Archives Center.

The museum is the main attraction to visitors to the Mall. Modern displays illustrate the diversity of New York State, ranging from the wilds of the Adirondacks to the sidewalks of New York City.

The Center is expected to draw hundreds of thousands of visitors from across the state, including many school groups and adults who remember the old museum in the State Education Building.



The Legislative Office Building

Before the Mall was completed, legislators and their staffs shared cramped office spaces in the Capitol Building, but life is more comfortable in the new Legislative Office Building (LOB). Each legislator has a two-room office furnished with three desk and chair sets, two sofas, two arm-chairs, two club chairs, three end tables, a credenza and multi-colored filing cabinets. So while you're in Albany, why not drop by your representatives' offices, sit a spell and share your views. An office directory is posted by each LOB elevator.

The LOB also houses committee, staff and public hearing rooms, legislative information facilities and exhibit space. The nine-story structure is connected to the Capitol by a tunnel under State Street. Each floor of the building features a different type of wood, including teakwood, mahogany, walnut, cherry and oak. An open three-story "well" and a large staircase greet visitors who enter on the State Street side.

demonstrated his mastery of the art of political campaigning. Instead of conceding the issue of the Mall and building on other topics, he stuck it right back down Goldberg's throat. The governor's enthusiasm for his pet project had not waned with the controversy; he simply added a pinch of candor to his "greatest capital in the world" pitch and gave it a new twist.

"Some people have said I'm more interested in buildings than people," he said, "Maybe that's because when they look at all the new construction I've sponsored, all they see is steel and concrete. When I see construction under way I see jobs. Not only construction jobs, but clerical jobs, service jobs, all kinds of jobs for all kinds of people."

On another occasion he said, "If one goes back to the times of Al Smith, there were those who called the Smith Building 'Al's Folly.' There were those who talked about the Erie Canal as 'Clinton's Folly.' I don't need to draw the analogy because we're getting awfully close to the Mall."

Speaking to crowds of construction workers at the World Trade Center, the governor was candid and effective: "All right, so I have an edifice complex. I like to build things and I like the jobs that provides." The promise of further construction probably won Rockefeller more votes than the disasters of the Mall cost him.

Two months after his fourth gubernatorial victory, Rockefeller was back at the Capitol asking for \$130 million for the ill-fated project. He addressed the body the day after a legislative committee was formed to oversee Mall expenditures, and he assured them that everything was being done to hold costs down. As a reward for legislative cooperation, he ordered the Legislative Office Building to be completed one year ahead of schedule (a speed-up which cost another \$300,000).

Once again he stated his belief that the project would be "The greatest thing to happen to this country in 100 years." It's doubtful that any legislators went along with this, but Rockefeller's personal plea for cooperation probably took the fighting spirit out of some. Assemblyman Peter Berle called the South Mall 'the legislature's Vietnam.' "Both Vietnam and the Mall reflect an improper sense of priorities," he said in 1971, "Both are involvements we should disengage ourselves from as soon as possible. This can be done by finishing the Mall. I see nothing left to finish in Vietnam."

The project was five and a half years behind schedule when Comptroller Levitt released another audit showing the final cost estimated at \$1.5 billion, nearly four times the original estimate. He pointed out that the financial plan invented by Mayor Corning would cost \$44.2 million more than a state-bonded plan would have, and labeled it "the rankest kind of subterfuge."

Buildings were opened as they were completed. The Justice, Swan Street and Legislative Office Buildings were occupied in 1972, the Tower Building in 1973, and work continued on the Agency towers and the rest. The official dedication of the South Mall, previously set for October, 1974,



**“...This was the end
of an artistic experience;
the dedication stone
was Rockefeller's signature
on his piece of art...”**

was mysteriously moved up to Nov. 21, 1973. On that day Governor Rockefeller renamed the complex the Empire State Plaza, an appropriate name, but a nuisance to those who are used to the 'South Mall.'

It was a windy, wintry day when Rockefeller gathered with other dignitaries to uncover the dedication stone of his monument. He stood in the midst of his mammoth creation and must have contemplated the ordeals he withstood to see its completion. At times it had seemed impossible (in fact it was still far from complete), but there it was: huge, stark white and unmistakably of his own design. This was the end of an artistic experience; the dedication stone was Nelson Rockefeller's signature on his piece of art. He chose the occasion to deliver a brief comment on the value of architecture. "Mean structures breed small vision," he said, "but great architecture reflects mankind at its true worth."



The Swan Street Building

The long, low Swan Street Building stretches almost the entire length of the Mall, from the Legislative Office Building on State Street to Madison Avenue, one quarter mile away.

The main occupant is the huge Department of Motor Vehicles and its automated and computerized equipment. Also among the 3,000 employees here are the members of the Capital Police force and the Racing and Wagering Board (lottery winners collect here).

The building actually consists of separate cores connected by skywalks on upper levels. Two tunnels run from the Swan Street Building to the main Concourse.



The Plaza

Anchored by the Cultural Education Center at one end and the State Capitol at the other, the vast Plaza is a gallery-park for state workers and visitors. The quarter-mile long pedestrian area is accented by three reflecting pools and adorned with notable pieces of sculpture and 360 maple trees.

The Plaza slopes uphill from the Capitol to the dedication stone and flagpoles, just in front of the one pool which converts to an ice-skating rink in winter months. Visitors stroll or sit along patterned-brick roads leading past the Agency buildings and an open walkway which surrounds the three pools.

A circular stage stands before the stairway crossing over Madison Avenue. Outdoor performances are held in good weather for spectators sitting in the stairway-grandstand.

The pool closest to the museum features a stabile called "Triangles and Arches" by the late American artist Alexander Calder.

The largest piece of Mall art, and the most expensive, is the teakwood "Labyrinth" by Francois Stahly, a spacious arrangement of 238 fitted logs located near the Tower Building.

Like a space-age windmill, the stainless-steel blades of George Rickey's "Two Lines Oblique" capture the attention of visitors. As the metal limbs turn in the breeze, passers-by carefully note the lowest point in their swing.

The Plaza restaurant, a glass-enclosed structure near the Egg, offers dining facilities, and a small pavilion near the Agency 4 building is available for fast food.

IV

Citizens Of New York, "Tomorrow Is Here"

It began with a pledge to make Albany "A capital city that people can visit and be proud of." Today you can visit the Empire State Plaza, walk past its reflecting pools and the Calder stabile, gaze up at the towers of marble and glass, tour the modern museum, study the paintings that line the concourse, and ride up to the observation deck for an impressive view of the countryside. You can visit the Mall, but taking pride in its existence is another matter. Some may join Nelson Rockefeller in considering this the centerpiece of a great state, but to others it is the epitome of excesses which have brought New York to its fiscal knees.

Governor Hugh Carey used the South Mall as a pivot in his turn away from the Rockefeller style, towards fiscal integrity. As Jimmy Carter swore to a post-Watergate morality in government, Carey articulated the post-South Mall sentiment in his 1974 inaugural address. "All around us in this capital are symbols of splendor, monuments of glass and marble," he said, "They stand as living embodiments of an idea of government as an ever-expanding institution to be paid for from the ever-expanding riches of tomorrow. To the citizens of New York I say: Tomorrow is here."

Tomorrow is here for Carey, but Rockefeller believes another day will come when his monument is appreciated as a reflection of his imaginative leadership. He hopes that the Mall's future value as a showcase for state and community activities will weigh heavy enough to balance the scandals and shortcomings of its past.

"People need it," he said as he left public office in 1977, one rung short of his ultimate goal, "People are going to love the Mall. It's going to give them a lift and they're going to be proud of it. That's what this country and the world needs — people and symbols they can look up to."

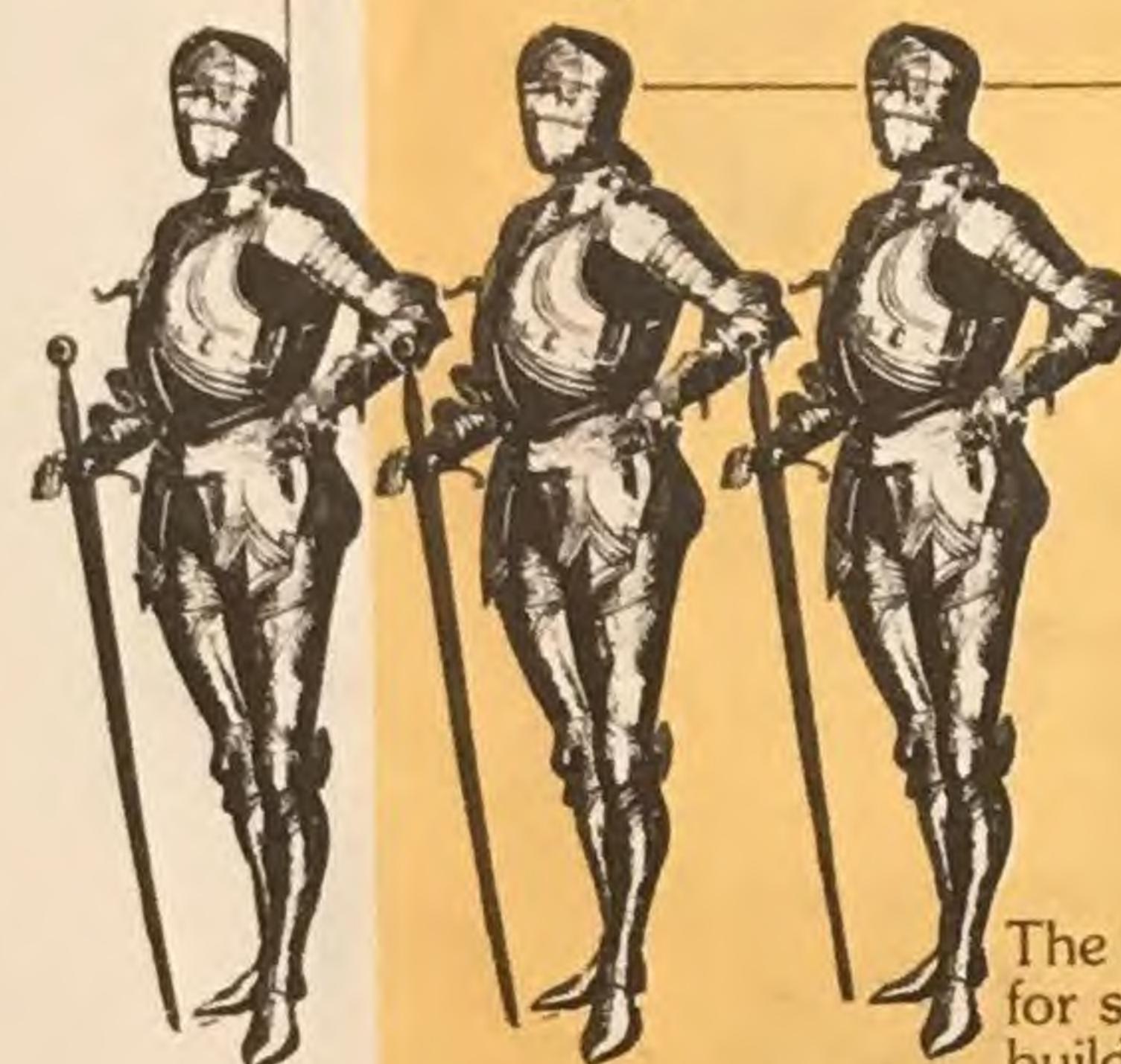


If you're inside the Concourse on a weekday, there's no need to go outside if you want to eat. Five cafeterias offer snacks, salads, sandwiches and hot meals during working hours, five days a week.

Cafeteria 1 is located between Agency Buildings 1 and 2; Cafeteria 2 is in the same location between Agency 3 and 4; Cafeteria 3 is opposite the bus terminal in the center of the Concourse; Cafeteria 4 is just off the intersection of the Concourse, towards the Justice Building; the Swan Street Building has a cafeteria on the B-3 level between Cores 3 and 4.

On the Plaza level, a refreshment pavilion serves light lunches and snacks seven days a week between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

SECURITY

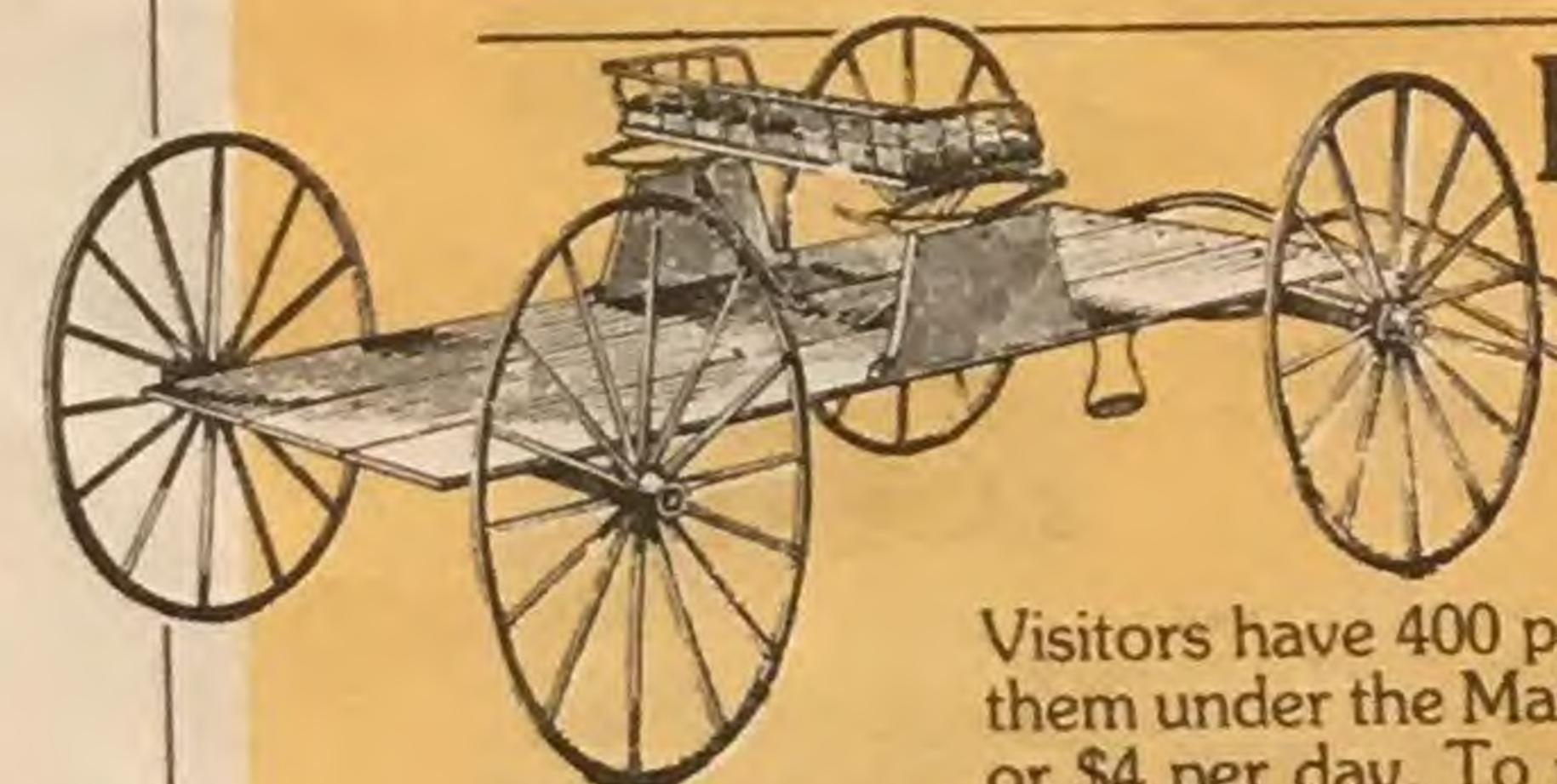


The Capital Police force, which is responsible for security at the Mall as well as for other buildings and grounds operated by the state, can be reached by dialing 474-5330. In case of an emergency, dial 111 on any state phone (not pay phones), or use any one of the direct lines located throughout the complex. The headquarters of the downtown division of the Capital Police is in Core 2 of the Swan Street Building.

Fire alarms are connected directly to the Albany Fire Department to ensure quick response to any smoke or fire.

A sophisticated central security console monitors alarms and activities throughout the Mall, checking 2,000 points every five seconds. In case of an alarm signal, the console immediately flashes a floor plan of the alarm area on a display screen.

PARKING



Visitors have 400 parking spaces reserved for them under the Mall, rentable at 50¢ per hour, or \$4 per day. To reach these lots, approach the Mall from the highway arterial and enter the tunnel. On the right, or north side, is one visitor lot. If the "full" sign is up, continue on to the turnaround and head back in the opposite direction. On the way out is another visitor lot.

If all the indoor parking is taken, try the lot near the Museum. The entrance is off Madison Avenue near the Cathedral, and the cost for parking there is the same as indoors.

State workers have a limited number of spaces available for a much larger number of employees. Those not lucky enough to have their own space reserved must find another lot, or park in remote state lots and take a shuttle bus to the office.

ART



For a complete guide to the Mall's art collection, the best reference is a free booklet available at information stands. This booklet lists the artist, the name and date of each piece, its material and size. A keyed map gives locations of the 47 sculptures and 40 paintings.

The Art Commission, chaired by architect Wallace Harrison and composed chiefly of New York City museum executives, selected 100 pieces of art valued at \$2,653,000. Many objects were commissioned and made for a particular site. In an introduction to the art guide, the Commission explains that all the pieces were chosen for "their ability to stimulate the hearts and minds of the spectators."

"The paintings and sculpture in this collection," the Commission continues, "symbolize the spirit of free inquiry and creative integrity which are so vital to modern society. Both the Commission's statement and its selections reflect Nelson Rockefeller's personal taste in modern art. The average visitor may have some difficulty interpreting individual objects but keeping an open mind is always the best approach."



“...The Mall exists as a city within a city, fortressed from the remaining slums...”

the 3.2 million sq. ft. Mall and the state office campus, while state workers are still located in 20 other Albany locations.

Rockefeller sought to make Albany a beautiful, "electrifying" capital, and his South Mall was to stimulate urban rehabilitation. In reality, the Mall exists as a city within a city, fortressed from the South End's remaining slums by giant walls, highway arterials and parking lots. Blocks of empty and decayed houses in areas bordering the Mall are slowly being rehabilitated with the help of federal assistance grants, but the other remnants of the Gut are far beyond repair. The improvements are not stimulated by the Mall, but are rather a

Nelson Aldrich Rockefeller's biography does not exactly typify the American dream. Although he attained the second highest office in the land, and presently is worth more than \$200 million, he wasn't exactly born in a log cabin, nor did he sell peanuts in his youth.

his career has included over 25 years of public service, 15 of them as Governor of New York State.

The following dates highlight some significant events in Rockefeller's life and provide an historical perspective to his role in the South Mall's story.

Born in Bar Harbor, Maine

JULY 8, 1908

B.A. from Dartmouth

JUNE 1930



Marries Mary Todhunter Clark

JUNE 23, 1930

Coordinator of the Office of Inter-American Republics

1940-1944

Assistant Secretary of State for American Republics Affairs

1944-1945

Director of Rockefeller Center, Inc.

1931-1958

Chairman of the International Development Advisory Board

1950-1951

Undersecretary of the Department of Health, Education & Welfare

1953-1954

Special Assistant to President Eisenhower

1954-1955



Elected to first term as New York State Governor

NOVEMBER 4, 1958

Withdraws from the 1960 Presidential race

DECEMBER 26, 1959

"We want a capital city people can be proud of"

OCTOBER 15, 1960

Announces separation from his wife

NOVEMBER 18, 1961

Son Michael lost at sea

NOVEMBER 20, 1961

reaction to normal urban decay and abnormal decay caused by the turmoil of ten years of construction.

Rockefeller's pledge to replace the Gut with modern housing for old and poor residents was never realized. The grand scheme conceived in 1962 called for a series of buildings to be constructed near the highway arterial leading to the Mall in a design that would complement the Mall concept.

Planning went on for six years compared to the nine months it took to finish the Mall design. By 1968 a final proposal for 442 units was developed, but then scrapped by Rockefeller because the cost per unit exceeded \$40,000. With critics blasting the soaring price of the Mall, Rockefeller was not eager to provide more ammunition by approving this \$18.4 million project. Instead he committed the money to the city of

**"...A new generation
of New Yorkers
looks toward a brighter stage
in the life of the Mall..."**

Albany, which has since used some of that amount to deliver housing. In the meantime, the 6800 residents who were forced to relocate did so in other parts of the city, other counties and other states. The area originally designated for housing is now a parking lot for state employees.

Albany after 5 p.m. is now more of a ghost town than ever. The downtown community's dreams for an improvement in the business climate have developed into nightmares. Employees of state agencies are more likely to patronize stores to be located in the Mall's enclosed concourse, or in suburban shopping centers, than to brave the weather and shop at downtown establishments.

While critics persist in pointing out Governor Rockefeller's failure to thoughtfully apply his artistic vision to this public project, a new generation of New Yorkers looks toward a brighter stage in the life of this controversial project. The memories of the South Mall's shortcomings were overshadowed for at least one day when the new New York State Museum was opened on July 1, 1976.

People from across the state gathered on that day to dedicate an exciting new facility where there once were miserable slums. Gone at last were the cranes and scaffolding; only interior work and landscaping remained to be finished. A new governor presided over the capital city while the creator of this marble showcase served as the nation's bicentennial vice-president.



The months that followed that mid-summer rebirth brought a steady stream of visitors to the Mall, each one anxious to see exactly what all the commotion was about. While the future of the Empire State Plaza as a tourist attraction is secure, a new legislative commission was formed in 1977 to ensure that its facilities will "improve the quality of life for New York residents and enhance the reputation of the capital city of this great state." That is the least that can be expected in return for the involuntary investment of \$1.5 billion in Nelson Rockefeller's city of marble.

21

Wilson Commission recommends downtown state complex

NOVEMBER 22, 1961

Mrs. Rockefeller obtains a divorce

MARCH 17, 1962

State appropriates 98.5 acres in Albany for the Mall

MARCH 26, 1962

Rockefeller names friend Harrison architect

MAY 24, 1962

Re-elected Governor

NOVEMBER 6, 1962

Signs bill permitting Mall financing without referendum

APRIL 19, 1963

Unveils model of South Mall complex

APRIL 23, 1963

Marries Margaretta Fitler Murphy

MAY 4, 1963

Cornerstone of the first Mall building is laid

JUNE 21, 1965

Re-elected to third term

NOVEMBER 8, 1966

Loses Presidential nomination to Richard Nixon

AUGUST 8, 1968



Four trips to Latin-America for President Nixon

MAY - JULY 1969

Re-elected to fourth term

NOVEMBER 3, 1970

Dedicates South Mall as Empire State Plaza

NOVEMBER 22, 1973

Resigns as Governor with one year to go

DECEMBER 11, 1973

Sworn in as 40th U.S. Vice-President

DECEMBER 19, 1974

Leaves public office and returns to private life

JANUARY 20, 1977



Returns to Mall for Constitutional Ball.
First tour since 1973.

"It's more beautiful than we expected."

MAY 25, 1977